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SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON URBANIZATION IN THE SOUTHWEST.

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THERE ARE FEW AREAS IN THE UNITED STATES THAT OFFER SUCH ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH AND STUDY AS DOES THE SOUTHWEST. THIS POTENTIAL IS NOT USED DUE TO A LACK OF RESEARCH FUNDING AND A LACK OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM WHICH ENCOURAGES RESEARCH. THE PROGRESS OF THE REGION IS HANDICAPPED BY THE LACK OF NEEDED INFORMATION AND DATA. THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTHWEST'S THREE MAJOR CULTURAL GROUPS, ANGLO-AMERICAN, MEXICAN-AMERICAN AND INDIAN, HAS SHOWN MAJOR CONFLICTS AND HOSTILITIES. MODERN PLANNERS HAVE NOT RECOGNIZED THESE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES. COMPETITION BETWEEN URBANIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION FOR LIMITED AND DIMINISHING WATER SUPPLIES AND LACK OF CITY PLANNING ON URBAN PROBLEMS OF ZONING, SLUM FORMATION, STREET PLANNING, EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, AND LACK OF IMPORTANT CULTURAL FACILITIES ARE CITED. THE AUTHOR FEELS THAT THE SOUTHWEST IS A NATURAL SOCIAL LABORATORY IN WHICH THE PROCESSES OF URBANIZATION, ACCULTURATION, ACCOMMODATION, RACE AND CULTURE CONFLICTS, STRATIFICATION, AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE CAN BE EXPLORED. (SF)

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SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON URBANIZATION IN THE SOUTHWEST

I regret that I am unable to attend this symposium on Urbanization in the Southwest. Unfortunately, an emergency meeting was called by the New Mexican State Planning Office and several government agencies to work out under the OEA programs for migrant agricultural workers. My attendance was requested under conditions that I felt that I could not resist. As I hope that there may be other symposiums on Urbanization in the Southwest, I trust that we might be able to meet again. The social and intellectual costs of distance in the Southwest are a serious obstacle to intellectual discussion, debate, and to the stimulating exchange of ideas on areas of mutual interest. Intellectual stagnation is always a persistent threat in this region, and more meetings of this type are badly needed.

There are few areas in the United States that offer such abundant opportunities for social research and study as does the Southwest. It is a land of dramatic social contrasts. On the one hand are found Metropolitan centers in contact with the most advanced scientific, literary, and political trends in the United States. On the other are isolated rural communities that have changed little in fifty years. There are agricultural oasis, dryland farming counties, and ranching areas inhabited by quite diverse Anglo-American groupings ranging from the Mormons through the Texas to Midwesterners. There are many distinctive Indian tribes undergoing quite different types of accommodation and acculturation. There are Spanish speaking groups that cover the spectrum from recently arrived migrants to those who were here before the coming of the Americans.

Unfortunately, few sociologists and other social scientists,with the exception of anthropologists and archaeologists interested in Southwestern Indians, have been interested in analyzing or studying the basic social characteristics and trends of Southwestern cultures, societies, and trends. The area is virtually

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unknown sociologically speaking. Few studies have been made on modern social phenomena.

There are legitimate reasons for the lack of studies and research projects. Research funds and graduate students have been hard to come by. Library resources are meager and teaching responsibilities heavy. The major foundations have demonstrated little interest in funding regional research proposals. Many staff members in the larger schools of the region are more interested in sociological fads spreading from the major national universities than in their local communities. They have few roots in the Southwest.

One must also admit that in many sections of the Southwest, it has not been safe to express too great an interest in local communities, social problems, or ethnic groups. Tenure, even today, is quite uncertain, and many sociologists in the past have been sacrificed to arouse occupational or political interests. Intellectual freedom so badly needed to encourage research and quality education is badly lacking in many areas of the Southwest.

None the less, the Southwest is badly in need of basic economic, social, cultural, and demographic data on population, social systems, and trends. To some degree, the progress of the region has been handicapped by lack of needed data and information. An awareness of the need for such data and of the importance of sociology is beginning to glimmor among professional and political groupings. Research opportunities are enormous.

Few Southwestern departments of Sociology can hope to attract many sociologists with a national reputation. Few are able to compete with eastern or far western universities in size of student body, amount of research grants, or number of doctoral candidates. We are either to remain second class departments in second class schools or to take a new and more searching look at research opportunities

around us. There is no reason why one or more Southwestern departments of sociology cannot become regional centers of considerable importance. One might, for example, reflect on the department at the University of Chicago and its role in the development of urban sociology through a series of local studies or on the importance that the department of sociology,under the leadership of Dr. Odum at the University of North Carolina,had in the South.

The participants at this symposium could well become the nucleus of a regional grouping of sociologists interested in research and study in the area. It is to be hoped that this is but the first of a series of meetings on Urbanization in the Southwest, as well as on other regional topics. Part of the social cost of distance in the Southwest is the difficulty of attending regional meetings. The dangers of intellectual stagnation are serious. We need to get together to engage in the profitable interchange of ideas and observations.

In this paper, I would like to make a few observations about certain selected characteristics of Urbanization in the Southwest. The observations are subjective in nature. They are based upon considerable travel, observation, and personal study in the region. They are,of course, highly tentative and subject to revision.

The Southwest has always been marked by a strong tinge of irony. As the first region of the United States to undergo European settlement, it was virtually the last to be effectively occupied and settled. Experiencing the first major cycle of wars between Indians and Europeans, it witnessed the last serious Indian effort to maintain territory and independence. Although the Indian population of much of the United States has vanished, that of the Southwest has maintained tribal integrity and is rapidly increasing. Glamorized by tourists, Chambers of Commerce, and writers, the area is virtually unstudied by social scientists.

As a semi-arid region marked by fluctuating and uncertain periods of drought, it is undergoing a rapid expansion of population accompanied by a process of urbanization that has made it one of the most urban regions in the United States. Although Southwestern cities are growing rapidly, the intervening spaces are becoming emptier. In many counties, there are fewer inhabitants than there were forty years ago

The Southwest is an area where three major cultural groupings and traditions have been in intimate contact for several hundred years. The relationships between Anglo-American, the Mexican-American, and the Indian have usually been marked by hostility and violence. Although the present process of Anglicization and urbanization threaten to sumerge the Indian and the Mexican-American, there is still considerable vitality left in their cultures. It is impossible to understand either the history of the Southwest, its cultural traditions, or its present social problems without some understanding of the hostility that existed until very recently between these three major groupings.

Many recent immigrants have not understood this. Thousands of dollars have been wasted by private and public administrators and planners and many regional and local programs have failed because the cultural values, history, the nature of the contacts with the dominant Anglo-American society, and present attitudes toward Anglos were not understood. Those who assume that plans and programs that have worked elsewhere in the United States will succeed among Mexican-American or Indians are in for a harsh and rude awakening. Cultural differences and memories of past injustices still run very deep.

Southwestern urbanization is a hot house product of war and of national defence. The greatest growth of urban population took place between 1940 and 1960. This growth did not develop from local industrialization, the exploitation of regional resources, or from an expansion of commerce. It was a direct result

of the injection of millions of government dollars into the region in the form of defence installations. There are few Southwestern cities that are not economically dependent upon military bases, defence installations, or industries dependent upon government contracts. Their population,for the most part,did not come from the surrounding rural hinterland but flowed in from more humid eastern and midwestern areas. These cities are urban islands, oases, independent of the surrounding country but economically dependent upon distant government centers. Changing military technology, international events, or decisions in Washington could destroy their economic foundations. These Southwestern cities, unfortunately, are in reality colonial outposts of a distant government. They are not fully integrated into the life of their regions and often have little functional relationship to it. Their citizens have little influence on decisions that vitally affect them. Thus, urbanization in the Southwest is a fragile flower born of war and fertilized by defence spending. Any change in the direction or amount of fertilization could well cause wilting.

Even the irrigated agricultural sectors of the Southwest are dependent upon heavy government investments. The installation of costly irrigation facilities and the implementation of many varied agricultural programs have created a subsidized agricultural system. The expansion of Southwestern agriculture as well as urbanization is dependent upon government expenditures. It is ironic that a region so completely subsidized by the Federal government should witness the rise of a political movement hostile to such subsidizes so basic for its continued economic expansion.

The rapid increase in urban population in the Southwest is exerting increasing pressure upon limited water supplies. The ever expanding demand for water has not been accompanied by the discovery of new water supplies. Present rates of water use are rapidly outstripping the safe yield of underground and surface water

supplies. Declining water tables, diminishing runoffs, rising costs of water development, and looming conflicts over water between different economic and regional groupings threaten the continued economic development of the Southwest.

Urban dwellers in the region are insulated by modern technology from the basic aridity of their environment. Air conditioning, the automobile, and the presence of low cost water running from their faucets create an artifical humid environment. The lavish and wasteful use of water in swimming pools, large elaborate grass planted parks and lawns, flower gardens, and ever sprawling suburbanization illustrate the humid characteristics of southwestern urbanization. It is, in essence, the injection of a subsidized wetland culture into a semi-arid environment.

As urban population increases, it will beat ever more insistently against limited water resources. Conflicts between different urban and rural categories of water users will spread. Similar conflicts between states and regions will also deepen. It has proven almost impossible to persuade urban and rural groupings to collaborate together in the formation of adequate associations to solve water problems. The failure to develop regional planning authorities will, in time, bring about federal intervention.

Present overuse of water is creating serious environmental problems for urban and rural dwellers alike. Declining water tables are increasing the costs of pumping everywhere. Overgrazing and overcutting in highland areas are reducing stream flow upon which so many cities depend. The declining water tables are causing permanent compaction of water bearing rock and earth strata that will permanently reduce their water bearing capacity. This compaction also causes subsistence and cracking of the earth's surface. If this subsistence and cracking were to involve a major urban center, it would have the effect of an earthquake, causing serious damage to human installations.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence that the majority of urban dwellers are aware of their critical water situation. Most urban groupings seem to feel that there will always be water. If shortages do develop, one can then call upon the federal government to solve the problem. There is no inclination toward water conservation or toward long-range planning. Protected from the harsh reality of the Southwest by attitudes and water using habits brought in from the more humid areas, they find it extremely difficult to face up to their problems. It may take a prolonged drought cycle involving considerable human suffering and financial loss to teach them a greater respect for their environment.

Parochialism and irreality are characteristic of urban life in the Southwest. Professional and business leaders tend to ignore important southwestern urban problems, such as the formation of slums, deteriorating race and culture relations, adequate land use planning, zoning, proper housing codes, street and park planning, educational needs, and the lack of important cultural facilities. Problems that other cities began to struggle with fifty years ago in the East are not even recognized as serious problems in the Southwest. The refusal to plan adequatley today may well threaten the future and livability of our cities tomorrow.

Urban leaders in our region refuse to cooperate with neighboring urban centers and rural groupings. A good example is the Rio Grande Valley. Cities, villages, and rural farming sections from the San Luis Valley in Colorado to El Paso, Texas, are all dependent upon the water flow of the Rio Grande River. Every attempt to organize a regional river valley authority has failed. As long as there is enough water, there are few problems. When a drought cycle begins, the farming and urban interests accuse each other or attack cities and farming areas up and down the river for stealing or misusing water. When the drought cycle ends, the quarreling stops and conditions revert to normal. The inhabitants of the valley are slowly

drifting toward disaster through an almost chronic inability to cooperate. Much the same could be said of the Colorado River Valley and others in the Southwest.

These same urban groupings are more oriented toward similar groups in the larger eastern and far western cities than they are toward the rural areas of their own region. Their knowledge of the rural problems of their own marketing areas is often quite limited. They tend to utilize the same business and professional mechanisms found elsewhere without any attempt to adjust them to the conditions of the drought cycle in the Southwest. Their attitudes and practices seriously accelerate rural problems.

Rural leaders find it hard to secure urban cooperation in the development and implementation of adequate plans to resolve rural problems. Local Chambers of Commerce tend to be more responsive to the ideological urging of sister chambers in distant cities than they are to the needs of their rural hinterlands. The attacks of Southwestern Chambers of Commerce upon the Area Redevelopment and the Rural Area Development programs has created considerable atagonism in many rural sections.

The distribution of Anglo-American, Mexican-American, Indian and Negro populations through the socio-economic structure of Southwestern cities is a subject that would richly reward research. In those urban centers with large numbers of Mexican-American inhabitants, one finds an interesting class structure. The higher political, social, and economic positions tend to be filled by English-speaking Americans. These are frequently families that migrated into the Southwest during World War II and were enriched by the war. They are joined by representatives of old line upper class families, frequently, Jewish that monopolized positions of power before the War. Unfortunately, there are few studies of the somewhat profound changes in the structure of the political and economic elites

of the Southwest that can measure the changes that are taking place.

In a few areas, such as northern New Mexico, remnants of the old Spanish-speaking land-owning and commercial upper class can be found integrated into Anglo society. They may occupy positions of power. Down to the depression of the 1930's in New Mexico, there were many wealthy and powerful Spanish-American families that played important roles in New Mexican economic and political activities. Most of these did not survive the depression.

Although the middle class, composed of white collar workers, professionals, and small businessmen, is predominantly Anglo in the urban Southwest, Mexican-Americans are beginning to infiltrate in large numbers. They are beginning to develop their own small businesses, to move into law, medicine, and teaching, and to find employment as white collar workers.

In northern New Mexico, there is a distinct tendency for the small Spanish-American business man to replace the Anglo-American who cannot compete in terms of limited profits, long hours, and family connections. The replacement of Anglo-American small businessmen by Spanish-Americans in northern New Mexico can be seen in las Vegas, Taos, and other northern New Mexican communities. The Spanish-American has also found a secure position in politics in this area, as political positions are an important source of employment in the region. As educational facilities improve and acculturation accelerates, more and more Mexican-American families will move into the middle class. This is a movement that warrants considerable study.

In many Southwestern Cities, the working class is predominantly Mexican-American. The Anglo Americans there tend to be either skilled workers or members of closed unions that make it difficult for minority groups to enter their ranks. The presence of large numbers of poorly paid unskilled Mexican workers tend to depress the wage levels, prevent unionization and diminish the number of Anglo-American workers.

The Negroes in the Southwest tend, on the average, to be slightly more skilled than do the Mexican-Americans. They were usually first introduced into the region by railroads and national corporations. They tend to be mechanics, cooks, and other types of semi-skilled and skilled workers. Their women find ready employment as domestics. Interestingly enough, families that hire Negro maids tend to be a slightly higher economic level in El Paso than do families that hire Mexican-American maids. There is a definite element of snobbishness in hiring colored maids.

As the Indian filters into the socio-economic urban structure, he tends to find admission in the lower economic and occupational levels. His position varies by region and by tribe. Here also is an area that needs far more research than it has received.

In summary, the entire Southwest awaits study and analysis by regional sociologists. It is a natural social laboratory in which the processes of urbanization, acculturation, accommodation, race and culture conflicts, stratification, and social and cultural change can be explored. It is to be hoped that the group at this symposium will take the preliminary steps to chart a long-range program of regional analysis and study.